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ABSTRACT

The Early Childhood Library Specialist Program of the School of Library Science, at North Carolina Central University, was organized in 1970 and has the following purposes: (1) to train students to become effective practitioners of early childhood library methods employed in introducing children to the uses of books and other media for the purposes of recreation and learning; (2) to provide an exemplary learning center for implementing early childhood methods and demonstrating practical application of classroom theories; (3) to acquaint the trainee with a diversity of learning media and resources appropriate for young children; (4) to involve library science students in actual learning programs in community agencies; and (5) to provide students with experience in work with parents in aiding them to become effective change-agents. The program idea grew out of the recognition of the need to train librarians to service the needs and demands of a segment of the population that heretofore has not been sufficiently considered as serious library clientele because of its non-reading ability. (A related document is ED 063 952.) (Author/SJ)

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Early Childhood Library Specialist Program

School of Library Science

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Durham, North Carolina 27707

LI 003 892

Mikell Toole and Tommie Young, Director
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The Early Childhood Library Specialist Program of the School of Library Science, at North Carolina Central University was organized in 1970, and functions with the following purposes in mind:

PURPOSES:

1) To train enthusiastic students to become effective practitioners of early childhood library methods employed in introducing children to the uses of books and other media for the purposes of recreation and learning
2) To provide an exemplary learning center for implementing early childhood methods and demonstrating practical application of classroom theories
3) To acquaint the trainee with a diversity of learning media and resources appropriate for young children
4) To involve library science students in actual learning programs in community agencies
5) To provide students with experience in work with parents in aiding them to become effective change-agents in the home

The program idea grew out of the recognition of the need to train librarians to service the needs and demands of a segment of the population that heretofore has not been sufficiently considered as serious library clientele because of its "non-reading" ability. The growing emphasis on early education seen at local, state, and national levels has served as an impetus for initiating an innovative program to train personnel to serve the myriad reading and pre-reading needs of preschool and primary age children.

PROGRAM COMPENENTS:

The Program, designed by Mrs. Tommie M. Young, Assistant Professor on the faculty of the School of Library Science, presently has three components: 1) preparation of Early Childhood Library Specialist who emerge from the Program with special competencies in early childhood work as well as basic professional librarianship, 2) model center for early learning practices and activities, and administration and organization of media collections and programs, and, 3) parent/child project that aims at demonstrating how newer theories in library work with children and parents can be implemented.

SPECIALIST TRAINING:

Students enrolled in the Specialist Program complete nine hours in Early Childhood Library Methods including the Practicum. Twenty-seven additional hours are spent in the core professional segment, and in related disciplines. The nature of the work requires select courses in education, home economics, and sociology. Here the specialist student studies such matters as learning theories, early education, parent education, and community relations. Upon successful completion of the library science-early childhood program, the student is awarded the Master of Library Science degree. Graduates of the School and Program are qualified to organize, supervise, and direct early childhood centers and programs in schools, public libraries and related agencies, and to function as a professional librarian in all types of libraries.

MODEL CENTER:

The model center is known as the Early Learning Center and Toybrary. Its design incorporates elements of the early childhood classroom and the library-media center. It accommodates children in free-play and in structured learning experiences. Its major design is the "center of interest." Four basic colors dominate these centers around which "clusters" of media including books, toys, artifacts, paint and easels, models and mock-ups are placed. Four sections of colored shelves extend from each of the interest centers toward the center of the room. Red shelves identify the Language, Art and Music center of interest; yellow distinguishes the Manipulative and Constructive area; blue -- the Social World and Ourselves, and green -- Science and Number concepts. All materials are placed on the shelves in an open arrangement. There is adequate space for free flow of activity between the centers, and there is little or no sense of division of the area. At the center of the room are four self-contained learning stations or carrells, each equipped with a carrell-size television, filmstrip viewer, cassette-record players, and 8mm projector. The language master and teaching typewriters are close at hand.

All furniture is scaled to accommodate the size of the child. There are Boston rockers, stacking chairs in pastel shades, red and yellow shag pillows, and bean-bags. The tables are tripod, rectangular, and round.

The floor is covered in gold carpet and matching draperies accent the windows.

Equipment ranges from the hardware found in the learning stations, to doll houses, toy refrigerator, and stove, hobby horses, and traffic signs, piano and small musical instruments.

The book and the toy are the centrical materials. Novelty books, mobile, "pop-ups", puzzles, and color books; washable, tactile, and foreign language books, giant books and miniature books are included. Other materials include study-prints, posters, sculpture, rock collections, puppets (hand and stick),masks and costumes; learning kits, slides, cassettes, records, films, and filmstrip. There are also stuffed animals, live fish, bugs, a frog and a turtle, plant life, and land and sea specimens. Materials are classified by Dewey, and housed by "interest."

The Center is a laboratory for the Early Childhood Specialist students. Here, the student has the opportunity to practice organization, selection, and arrangement of varied types of materials as well as utilize them with young children. The Center attempts to demonstrate ways in which early learning centers can be stocked, arranged, and center programs implemented.

PARENT/CHILD PROJECT:

The parent/child project is a three-year undertaking and it sets forth to demonstrate ways that public libraries and related agencies can implement programs in work with young children and parents. There are five children in the project that began January 15, 1972. Each child is between the ages of two years and nine months of age and three years and three months of age. The children come to the Center for two and one-half hours two mornings a week.

The parent is expected to spend a third morning in the Center with the child. Additionally, the parent is expected to spend at least three hours a week in "at home" learning experiences, basing the experience on an item of media "loaned" from the Center. Books and toys are checked-out by the child and transported in canvass bags emblazoned "Early Learning Center".

Parents and Specialist-students meet once a week and evaluate the progress records maintained by the Specialist and parent. Both Specialist and parent evaluate the previous experience of the child and make decisions as to the next step.

CENTER PROGRAM:

The activities of the Center are built around the kinds of experiences that librarians and educators agree are appropriate for the specific age group. Because of the media function of the library-oriented program, most of the structured experiences begin with a "medium", generally a toy, book, or a natural object. Out of the "object experience" come certain skills, concepts, and precepts that the Specialist aids the child in isolating, defining, identifying, and categorizing. As the child and Specialist explore the "medium" the child is aided in perceiving the experience and real learning takes place.

Children report to the Center at nine o'clock. They participate in free play for a time, and as the morning progresses the child moves from number games to language play, from story time to rhythmic activities, from painting to seed planting. When the weather is pleasant, they go on nature trails and visit community agencies.

Books, slides, filmstrips, and role-playing prepare them for many of their "exploration".

The present parent/child project is specifically designed to meet the needs of mothers who are not employed outside the home, yet who cannot afford, or do not wish to send their children to traditional day-care or nursery school programs. The Program recognizes that a number of children who are enrolled in programs may not receive the full impact of the experience. Such a Center program as this project proposes can take-up the slack.

The parent/child project asks the question, "Can a child attend a mediated-instructional program for two days a week, accompanied by his mother for two and one-half more hours, and reinforced at home with a continuum experience for approximately three hours, make significant gains in development comparable to the child enrolled in a traditional nursery or preschool program?" We believe he can!

FUNDING AGENCIES:

The initial materials for the Early Learning Center were made available by a grant from the Z. Smith Reynolds Company. The Carnegie Corporation of New York has made available for a three-year period, funds that provide for a full-time director, a secretary, student field trips, staff development, cooperating agency support and parents' stipends. Additionally, fifteen fellowships will be supported during the three year period. The U. S. Office of Education funded an Institute for Public Librarians in Service to Young Children which includes a survey of library services

to young children in North Carolina, five fellowships for graduate students and stipends for ten in-service librarians during the summer of 1972.